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I also certify that the attached copy of the request for grant of a Patent (Form 1/77) bears an amendment, effected by this office, following a request by the applicant and agreed to by the Comptroller-General.

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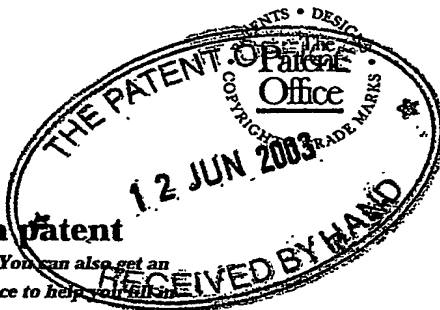
Andrew Gersey

Dated 23 June 2004

Patents Form 1/77

Patents Act 1977
(Rule 16)

12 JUN 2003



13JUN03 E814643-1 D02823
P01/7700 0.00-0313624.9

Request for grant of a patent

(See the notes on the back of this form. You can also get an explanatory leaflet from the Patent Office to help you fill in this form)

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1. Your reference

TRC/BP6138408

2. Patent application number

(The Patent Office will fill in this part)

0313624.9

3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant (underline all surnames)

Avon Polymer Products Limited.
Manvers House, Kingston Road
Bradford-On-Avon, Wiltshire
BA15 1AA

Patents ADP number (if you know it)

If the applicant is a corporate body, give the country/state of its incorporation

UNITED KINGDOM

06129506002

4. Title of the invention

Fluid Handling Assemblies

5. Name of your agent (if you have one)

"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent (including the postcode)

MEWBURN ELLIS LLP
York House
23 Kingsway
London WC2B 6HP

Patents ADP number (if you know it)

109006 ✓

6. If you are declaring priority from one or more earlier patent applications, give the country and the date of filing of the or of each of these earlier applications and (if you know it) the or each application number

Country

Priority application number
(if you know it)

Date of filing
(day / month / year)

7. If this application is divided or otherwise derived from an earlier UK application, give the number and the filing date of the earlier application

Number of earlier application

Date of filing
(day / month / year)

8. Is a statement of inventorship and of right to grant of a patent required in support of this request? (Answer 'Yes' if:

Yes

- a) any applicant named in part 3 is not an inventor, or
 - b) there is an inventor who is not named as an applicant, or
 - c) any named applicant is a corporate body.
- See note (d))

Patents Form 1/77

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Continuation sheets of this form

Description 12

Claim(s) 0

Abstract 0 *D*

Drawing(s) 3 *B*

10. If you are also filing any of the following, state how many against each item.

Priority documents

Translations of priority documents

Statement of inventorship and right to grant of a patent (*Patents Form 7/77*)

Request for preliminary examination and search (*Patents Form 9/77*)

Request for substantive examination (*Patents Form 10/77*)

Any other documents
(*please specify*)

11. I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.

Signature

Mark Ellis

Date

12. Name and daytime telephone number of person to contact in the United Kingdom

T.R. Calderbank

11 June 2003

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DUPLICATE

FLUID HANDLING ASSEMBLIES

This invention relates to fluid handling assemblies where
5 a tube receives a spigot, and to a quick release
mechanism for separating the tube and spigot. The
invention is applicable to, but not limited to,
assemblies in animal milking apparatus.

10 In a fluid handling assembly, it may be necessary for a
tube to be fitted to a spigot extending from a vessel.
Usually, the tube is elastic in the radial and axial
sense. Typically, the tube is made of rubber. In this
arrangement, shown in cross-section in Figure 1, fluid
15 can pass through the tube 1 of diameter d from / into the
vessel 2 via the spigot 3. The tube may distend radially
to accommodate the spigot, causing the diameter of the
tube to increase.

20 The tube may need to be detached from the spigot, for
example when the assembly is to be cleaned or a part of
the assembly replaced. The elastic nature of the tube,
however, can present difficulties during detachment of
the tube from the spigot. The usual way to remove the
25 tube is to pull the tube axially away from the spigot, as
shown in cross section in Figure 2. The tube 1 stretches

axially as the pulling force 4 is applied and a radial gripping force is applied to the spigot by the section 5 of the tube that accommodates the spigot 3.

- 5 As the axial force on the tube is increased, the diameter d of the tube decreases, which increases the grip of the tube on the spigot. This effect is known in the art as 'necking down'. Increasing the axial force on the tube compounds the effect, as the grip of the tube on the
- 10 spigot will increase accordingly. As a result, the detachment process becomes increasingly difficult.

Furthermore, the detachment process increases wear and tear on the tube as the tube is distended significantly,

15 possibly close to its elastic limit, each time it is removed from the spigot.

An alternative removal method is to push the tube axially off the spigot. As shown in Figure 3, applying an axial

20 force 6 to compress the tube 1 causes the diameter d of the tube to increase accordingly, in an effect known as 'barrelling'. However, in practice, it is difficult to apply such a force, as manually gripping the section 5 of the tube that receives the spigot tends to clamp the

25 section 5 against the spigot. Axial movement of the tube 1 relative to the spigot 3 is therefore difficult.

Therefore, at its most general, the present invention proposes an assembly where a spigot is received axially in an end of a tube, there being a sleeve of rigid material located concentrically between the spigot and the tube. The sleeve serves to separate a portion of the tube from the spigot.

The present invention offers an advantage of providing a means to allow quick-release of the tube from the spigot, with a minimum of effort required. The quick-release means can avoid extensive stretching of the tube.

According to a first aspect of the invention, there may be provided an assembly comprising a vessel having at least one spigot extending therefrom; a tube through which fluid can pass, the tube being elastic in the axial and radial sense; and a sleeve of rigid material having substantially the same inner diameter as the outer diameter of the spigot; wherein the spigot is axially received in a neck of the tube, and the sleeve is located concentrically between the spigot and the tube so that the sleeve is slidable axially on the spigot and at least a portion of the tube extending from the neck is separated from the outside of the spigot by the sleeve.

When the tube is to be removed from the spigot, the sleeve is gripped and the sleeve and neck of the tube pushed axially, away from the vessel, to separate the tube from the spigot. The necking down effect can
5 therefore be eliminated.

When the neck of the tube is pushed axially, 'barrelling' (the opposite effect to 'necking down') is observed, as the axial length of the tube is compressed and the
10 diameter of the tube increases accordingly. Axially pushing the neck of the tube increases the barrelling effect, reducing the gripping tendency of the tube on the spigot and therefore reducing the effort required to disengage the tube from the spigot.

15

The sleeve may separate from the spigot the whole of the section of the tube that accommodates the spigot. Alternatively, the sleeve may separate from the spigot just a portion of the section of the tube that
20 accommodates the spigot, so that an adjacent section of the tube contacts the spigot directly.

Preferably, the tube does not receive the full axial length of the sleeve, so a section of the sleeve
25 protrudes axially from the tube. This section of the

sleeve may be gripped to allow the sleeve and tube to be pushed axially relative to the spigot.

Preferably, the protruding section of the sleeve includes
5 a flange extending from the section. The flange may extend from the rim of the sleeve. The flange is not received in the bore of the tube and provides a surface extending perpendicularly or obliquely from the axis of the sleeve, against which a pushing force can be applied
10 to slide the sleeve (and the tube) off the spigot. During axial movement of the sleeve along the spigot, the flange abuts the neck of the tube, enhancing axial compression of the tube and the resulting barrelling effect.

15 Additionally, or alternatively, the end portion of the sleeve located axially furthest in the bore of the tube may be chamfered. The outer surface of the sleeve may incline towards the axis of the sleeve to provide a gradient over the depth of the sleeve wall that assists
20 insertion of the sleeve in the tube during assembly.

The sleeve may include, at the end located furthest inside the bore of the tube, a tapered portion. The tapered portion is formed by the wall of the sleeve
25 inclining towards the axis of the sleeve to narrow the

opening of the sleeve. The tapered portion may allow easier insertion of the sleeve into the tube.

Additionally or alternatively, the sleeve may include at least one slit in the wall of the sleeve. The slit may extend from the rim of the sleeve, preferably the rim located axially furthest inside the bore of the tube, and extend substantially axially along a section of the sleeve. There may be a series of slits spaced around the circumference of the sleeve. The spacing of the slits may be approximately even around the circumference of the sleeve.

If the sleeve includes a tapered portion at one end, a slit or slits may extend from the narrowed opening of the sleeve.

The slits may allow the radial gripping force from the section of the tube that receives the spigot to be transferred through the sleeve to the spigot, forming a tight fit between the sleeve and the spigot. Slits may be useful in an arrangement where the sleeve separates from the outside of the spigot the entire section of the tube that accommodates the spigot.

The sleeve is made of any rigid material. Preferably, the sleeve is made of plastic.

A section extending from the neck of the tube may be
5 modified to include a widened bore relative to the rest
of the tube, suitable for receiving the sleeve. The
modification may include a narrowing of the walls of the
tube or a flaring of the tube. The modification may allow
the sleeve to be received in the neck of the tube without
10 the tube expanding radially, reducing the residual hoop
tensile strain and associated problems such as tube
cracks.

Ideally the axial length of the widened bore of the tube
15 is less than the axial length of the sleeve. The inside
surface of the widened section of the tube may, at the
boundary between the widened and non-widened sections,
incline relative to the axis of the tube. The incline may
provide a smooth gradient between the widened and non-
20 widened sections. The inclined surface may abut a
chamfered portion on the sleeve.

A section of bore extending from the neck of the tube may
be provided with formations that interlock with
25 formations on the sleeve when the sleeve is inserted
axially in the tube. The interlocking formations may be

a bayonet fitting. The modified tube and sleeve may be part of a kit for a particular diameter spigot, which allows accommodation of the sleeve in the tube without radial stretching of the tube in the section that
5 accommodates the sleeve. The sleeve may be fixed inside the neck of the tube so that the tube and the sleeve form a single piece.

The assembly described above may be, for example, part of
10 animal milking apparatus. The vessel may be a claw piece that comprises a housing with at least one spigot. The tube may be claw tube, known in the art as a 'liner'. The liner, when threaded onto the spigot, allows milk to be fed into the claw piece and/or drained from the claw
15 piece.

According to a second aspect of the invention, there may be provided a method of assembling the assembly of the first aspect of the invention, comprising:
20 inserting a spigot into the sleeve of rigid material, and inserting the sleeve and spigot into the neck of the tube; or
inserting the sleeve of rigid material into the neck of the tube and inserting the spigot into the sleeve;
25 such that at least a portion of the tube extending from the neck is separated from the spigot by the sleeve.

The fluid handling apparatus may be animal milking apparatus.

- 5 An embodiment of the present invention will now be described in detail, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 shows in cross section a rubber tube attached to
10 a spigot, and has already been described;

Figure 2 shows in cross section necking down of the rubber tube when an axial force stretches the tube, and has already been described;

15

Figure 3 shows in cross section barrelling of the rubber tube as a force axially compresses the tube, and has already been described;

- 20 Figure 4 shows in cross section an animal milking apparatus incorporating an assembly of the present invention;

Figure 5 shows in cross section an assembly of the
25 present invention, where the sleeve includes a tapered portion; and

Figure 6 shows from the side as sleeve of an assembly of the present invention where the sleeve includes slits and a tapered portion.

5

An animal milking apparatus includes, as shown in Figure 4, a claw piece 2 having a spigot or spout 3 that is inserted into a liner 1. The spigot 3 has an opening 7 lying in an oblique plane to the axis of the spigot. The 10 claw piece also has an outlet conduit 8. Milk receiving means, not shown, sends milk through liner 1 into claw piece 2.

A sleeve, indicated at 9, and possibly of plastic 15 material, sits concentrically between the spigot 3 and a portion of the tube 1 extending from the neck of the tube. The sleeve includes a flange 10, extending from the sleeve rim, lying outside of the tube 1. At the opposing rim of the sleeve 9, there is a chamfered region 11, 20 which allows easy insertion of the sleeve into the tube during assembly.

The sleeve 9 provides a quick release facility for the liner 1. Pushing the flange 10 of the sleeve 9 in the 25 axial direction indicated at 12, slides the sleeve axially along the spigot 3, away from the claw piece 2. A

barrelling effect is created in the liner as the liner is axially compressed. The surface 13 of the flange abuts the neck of the liner 1, axially compressing the liner 1 and enhancing the barrelling effect.

5

The liner 1 can therefore be removed quickly from the spigot 3 with a minimal amount of effort and no stretching of the liner 1.

- 10 The liner 1 may include a section with a widened bore, as shown in Figure 4. The widened bore extends from the neck of the liner 1, provided by narrowed liner walls 14. The widened bore also includes inclined surfaces 15 against which the chamfered surfaces 11 of the sleeve 9 may abut.

15

The sleeve may be provided with a tapered portion, as shown in Figure 5 at 16. In this arrangement, the sleeve 9 sits at the end of the spigot 3. The tapered portion is useful for introducing the sleeve into the liner 1,

- 20 particularly if the diameter of the bore of the tube is significantly less than the outside diameter of the sleeve.

- The sleeve may be provided with at least one slit. As
25 shown in Figure 6, slits 17 extend axially from the narrowed opening of the sleeve 18. In the figure, the

slits 17 are evenly spaced around the circumference of the sleeve. Slits may be provided on a sleeve with no tapered portion.

FIG 1

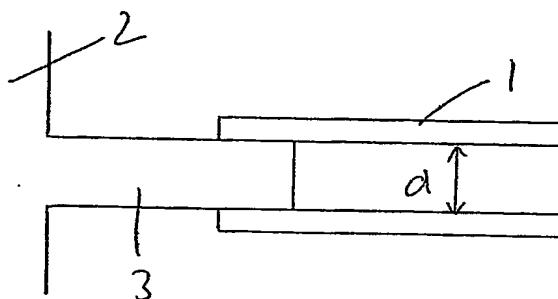


FIG 2

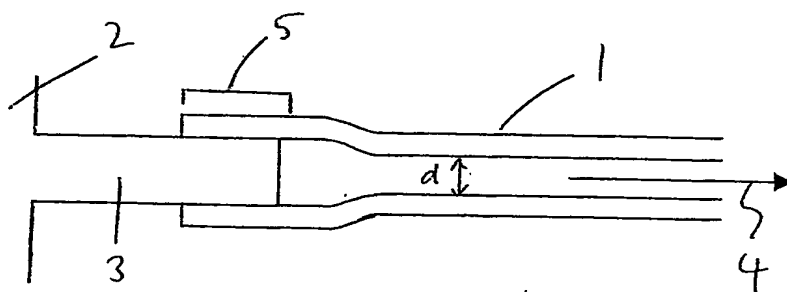


FIG 3

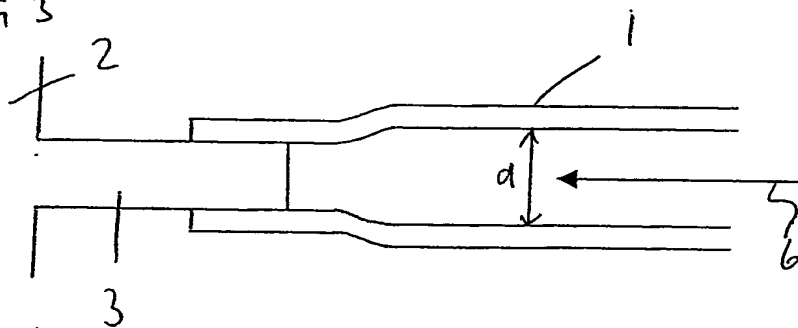


FIG 4

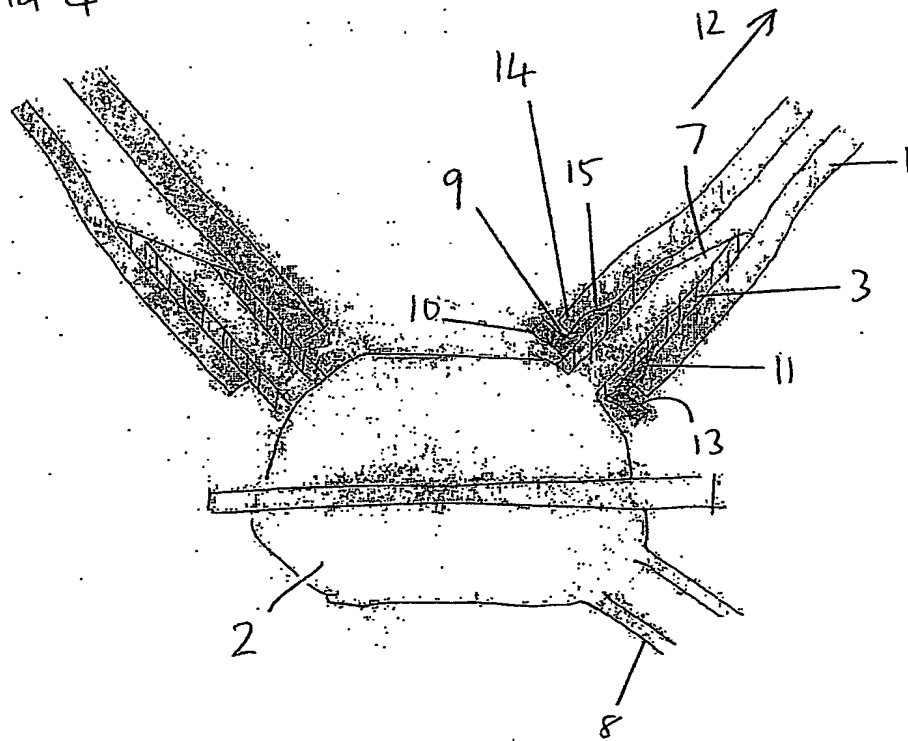


FIG 5

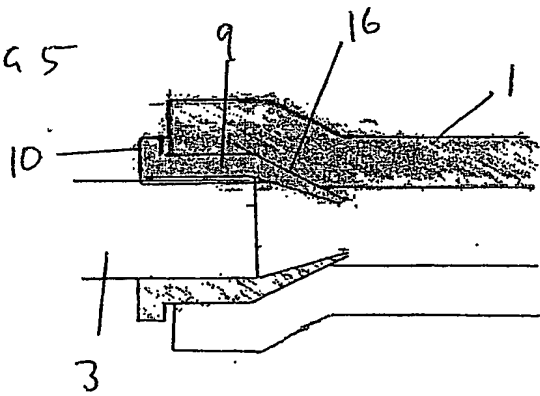
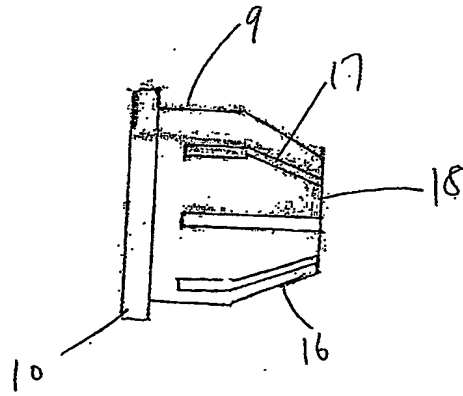


FIG 6



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